

THE TOMBS AND MAUSOLEUMS OF SULTANS OF BENGAL *

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The word 'tomb' (Gr. tymbos), according to Chamber's Encyclopedia, is a monument erected over a grave, in order to mark the resting place, and preserve the memory of the deceased; and 'mausoleum' is derived from the tomb erected to King Mausolus by his widow Artemesia at Halicarnassus in Asia Minor, in 353 B.C. Its beauty and grandeur make it rank amongst the Wonders of the World. Hence, monumental building constructed over tombs is called 'Mausoleum'.

In almost all the civilised countries of the world, people erected memorial structures over the graves of their important personalities in order to perpetuate their names. In Islam, however, the architectural glorification of the dead by raising pretentious tombs and mausoleums over the graves is condemned, because of the fear of idolatrous worship, though marking of graves upto a span is permitted.¹ This prohibition was not being strictly observed because of the fact that at the initial stage the object was not to monumentalize the tombs rather it was more an observance of the behavioural pattern of the society.² The evolution towards monumentalisation was slow and gradual and it is as late as 4th century Hijri, i.e., 10th century A.D., that we find references of such commemorative buildings erected over the tombs. The origin of raising monumental tombs seems to have been derived from the Christian and Jewish practice.³

For a Muslim, a visit to tombs and cemeteries is considered an act of righteousness and a deed of piety. Naturally, therefore, a great deal

* This is the text of speech delivered at the Iran Society on 11th March, 1978.

1. It is related that Mohammad (May peace be on him) prayed that Allah may not allow his followers to make his tomb an object of idolatrous adoration and consequently adoration paid to the tomb at al-Madina has been condemned by the Wahabis and other Muslim reformers. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Vol. 2, p. 246); or, that the Prophet prohibited building with mortar on graves and also placing inscriptions upon them; or, that the Khalifa Ali said to him, "Shall I not give you orders which the Prophet gave me, namely, to destroy all pictures and images and not to leave a single lofty tomb without lowering it within a span from ground." (*Jama-i-Tirmizi*, Vol. 1, pp. 320-321, Nawal Kishore Press, 1912).
2. Oleg Graber, The Earliest Islamic Commemorative Structures, *Ars Orientalis*, Vol. 6, 1966, p. 84.
3. J. Perdersen, *Art masjid*, pt. A4, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

of attention was paid to burial-places and care was taken to show reverence to the glory and honour of their dead, that is, to such of those who, by their piety and achievements, had earned veneration and affection and thereby deserved lasting memorials.

The tomb of Prophet Mohammad (May peace be on him) would naturally serve as an architectural model for the Muslims all over the world. His tomb in the beginning comprised a simple grave with entrance archways on all the four sides and it was only during the reign of Mamluk Sultan, al Mansur Kalaun in 678/1279, that a copula was added on the roof.⁴

Till the 3rd century Hijri/9th century A.D., the building of tombs was not in practice as is evident from the contemporary writings of the geographers, like Ibn Rustah and Yaqubi. But the existence of such monuments in the following century is recorded by al-Muqaddisi and Ibn Hawqal. It was, however, only in the 12th century A.D., that the practice became very common and we find mention of such constructions by Ibn Jubair.⁵

The history of the evolution of tomb or mausoleum is interesting, as it appears that, in the beginning, it used to be erected over the graves of the Imams, saints and the martyrs. In the next step of its development, it was associated with the ruling class and in the final stage a 'Democratisation of Mausoleum'⁶ took place and it remained no longer a monopoly of the above classes, but any body, who could afford it, could have one built. Persons of distinction are generally honoured with tombs constructed with domes, whereas masonry tombs are always erected over the graves of persons of respectability.⁷

The early mausoleum, in its structure, was a simple construction which was gradually transformed into a single-domed square or polygon chamber with a grave in the centre and entrance on all the four sides ; later on, the entrance was confined to one side only. In many cases, a copula, supported by four walls or by columns etc., is constructed over smaller monuments.⁸ It had often been the case that Muslim rulers erected their mausoleums during their life-time.⁹ The earliest existing example of a perfect domed mausoleum, is that of Qubba al-Sulaibiah in Samarra in Iraq, dated 862 A.D. But the architectural style which became a formula

4. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. 3, 1936, p. 90.

5. Oleg Graber, *Op. Cit.* p. 38.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

7. T. P. Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, p. 636.

8. *Ibid*

9. *Ibid.*, p. 637.

and popular throughout the eastern Islamic world is the mausoleum of Sultan Ismail, the Samanid, built in the tenth century in Bukhara. It is a simple square with four entrances and a large central dome; there are four copulas in the corners of the building over a gallery, supported on four pillars at the four corners. The Bengal type is the same as above, but with a little modification in view of its climatic condition and local style, based on the natural curvilinear bamboo-bent hut roof design, in the form of a curved cornice for the quick dispersal of rain water.

The components of a mausoleum or maqbara¹⁰ are as follows :—

1. A grave (Qabr) :—The body of a Muslim is laid in the grave with his face towards Mecca. There are two types of graves; one dug in the middle of a burying place is called Zarih or Sanduqi and if dug in the side it is called Lahad or Baghli. The latter is not common in Bengal because of the soft earth. Generally, a husband is placed at the right side of the wife. In India, usually, the graves are flat at top with a small or large barrel-shaped casket called 'qalamdan,' in the case of male occupant or a slate writing board called 'takhti,' in the case of female occupant. The masonry tomb is called Sarcophagus.

2. The domed-chamber (Qubbah¹¹ or Hujra) :—It consists of one or more graves usually of the relatives of the deceased to whom the tomb was originally dedicated.

The domed-chamber bears great resemblance to the Syrian cult-houses, the Kalubes and to the Sassanian fire temples of Persia. In Islamic architecture, the dome is a sign of honour and veneration and is erected in mosques, palaces, throne-rooms, gates, pavilions, etc.¹² Sometimes a grave is placed in the underground vault (Tahkhana) approached by a narrow passage below, whereas on the top is constructed the Cenotaph to mark the position of the grave. The system of the underground chamber was in practice during the reign of the Saljuqi Sultans of Iran in the 12th century. In India, it was popular during the Mughal rulers.¹³ There is no underground tomb-chamber in the case of Bengal mausoleums, probably because of the climatic conditions.

3. Mosque :—It is a part and parcel of a mausoleum for the offering of prayers and recitation of *Quran* by visitors to the mausoleum. In the initial stage, there used to be a Mihrab or prayer-niche in the western wall of the domed-chamber; separate mosque is of a later development.

10. The tomb of a saint is called Mazar, Astana, Dargah or Turbat, whereas that of a martyr, Mashhad. Rauza is the garden in which is situated the tomb of Prophet Mohammad (May peace be on him), at Madina. This is sometimes used in the generalised term to mean mausoleum also.

11. Qubbah is also sometimes used to mean mausoleum.

12. Oleg Graber, *Op. cit.*, p. 44.

13. A. B. M. Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, 1961, p. 362.

4. Tomb-stone (Katba)¹⁴ :—Usually a marble stone is placed bearing verses from *Quran* with the name of the deceased and the date of his death, all beautifully inscribed for decoration as well as for identification purposes called Epitaph.

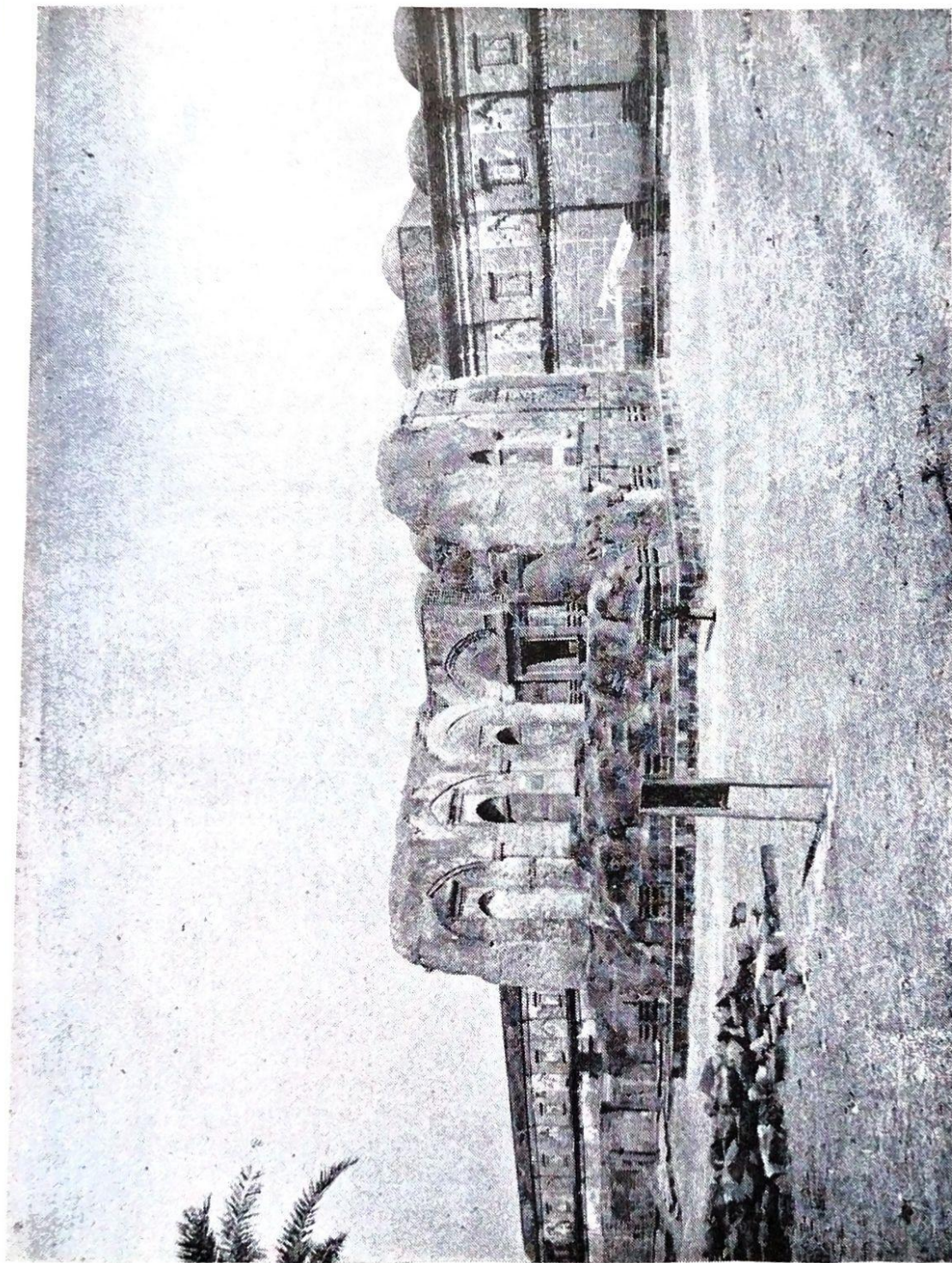
5. Head-stone (Chiraghdan) :—It is sometimes placed containing recesses for oil lamps lighted on Thursday nights particularly.

The entire complex described above is called mausoleum. The transformation from simplicity to splendour was rather rapid and very soon monumental tomb became one of the most important forms of architecture throughout the Islamic world and also in India since the advent of Muslims in this country. In the capital and other important places of Delhi Sultanate, Provincial kingdoms and the Moghul Empire with its provinces, a large number of mausoleums that have become the landmark of monumental history of the country came to be constructed since the 13th century. The earliest mausoleum was that of Sultan Ghazi (Nasiruddin Mahmud, the Governor of Laknauti, Bengal), son of Iltutmish, who died in the life-time of his father in 1231 A.D. The style of construction is peculiar. It contains an underground octagonal chamber with a flat roof slightly raised above the level of the ground by means of supporting pillars from below and without dome. The most spectacular among the pre-Moghul buildings of the type, apart from Delhi, are those of the Sultans of Gujrat, Malwa and Deccan. Among the provincial kingdoms the monumental tombs of the Sultans of Jaunpur and Bengal are very few and far between. It is obvious that the tombs and mausoleums must have been constructed on the graves of many sultans who ruled over Bengal since the 13th century, but most unfortunately, there hardly exists today any mausoleum or tomb which can correctly and authentically be ascribed to a particular Sultan. The only evidence that associates them with the royal occupants, is the local traditions. There is no epitaph on tombs and mausoleums to identify the fact.

It will be of interest to note that the earliest tomb and mausoleum in Bengal is that of the military Commander, Zafar Khan Ghazi at Tribeni, Hugli, dated 1300 A.D. It bears the inscription but it is in such a ruinous condition that it is not possible to ascertain any definite architectural form and style. It is thus difficult to draw up an idea as to how the earlier mausoleum looked like and what was the architectural style adopted then.

The reason for this uncertainty or lack of decisive evidence is the destruction of the buildings due to vicissitudes of nature and vandalism of man. The buildings were destroyed due to inclemency of weather, i.e., torrential rain, floods and the growth of the pipal and other trees and the

14. It is also called 'Lauh-i-Qabr' or 'Tawiz'.



Sikandar Shah's Mausoleum (Plate 1)

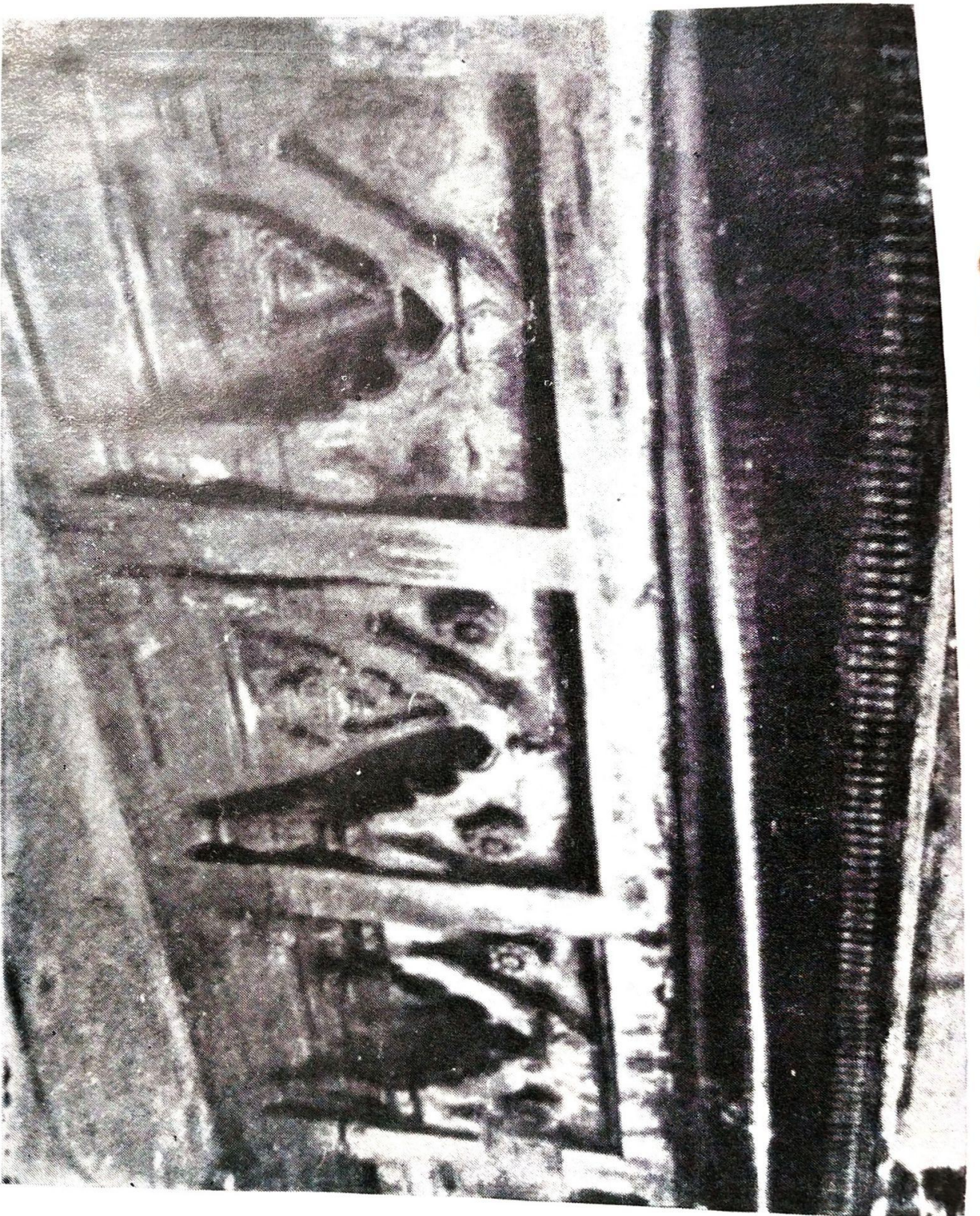


Doorway of Sikandar's tomb-chamber (Plate 2)

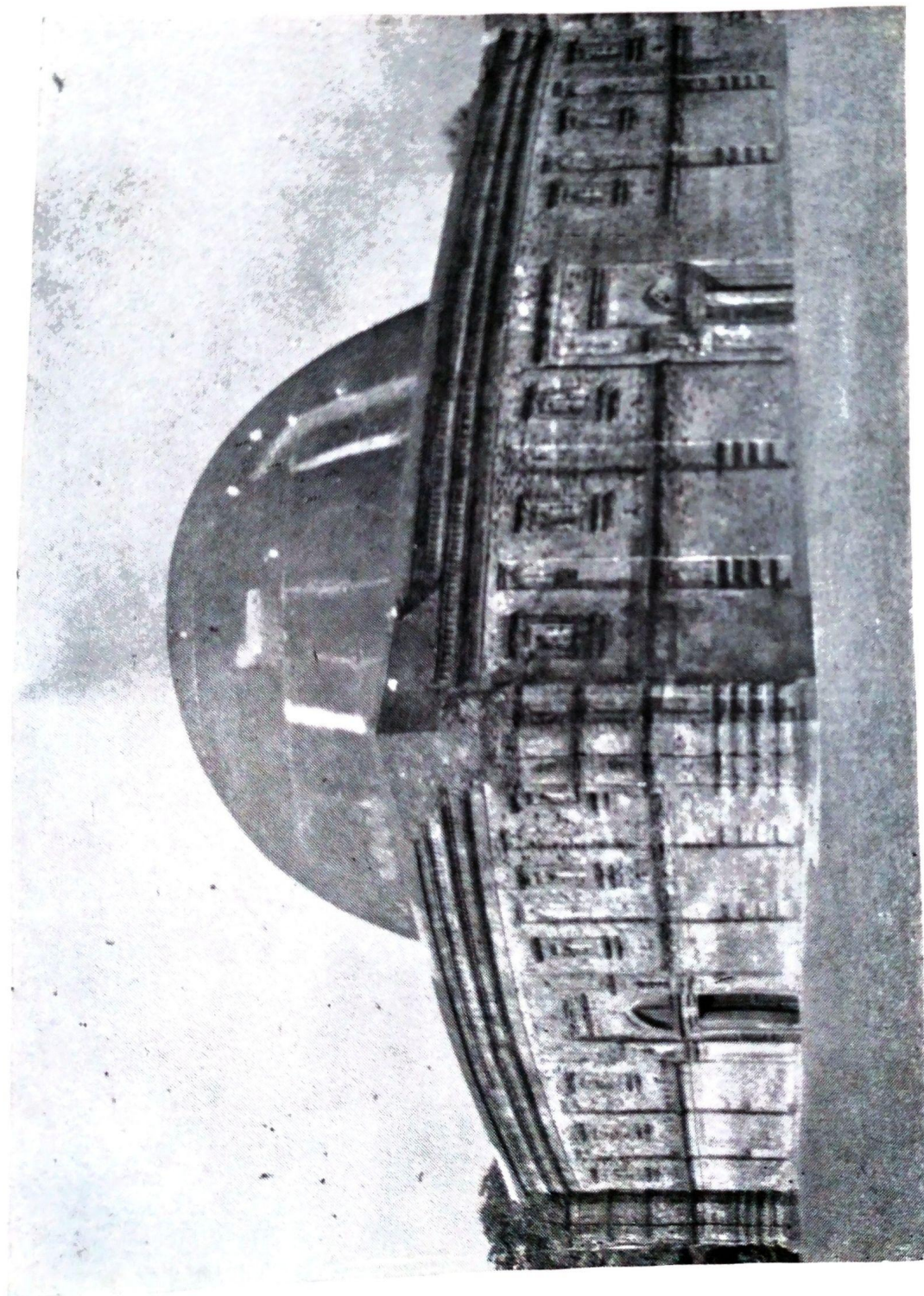
Courtesy : Archaeological Survey of India



Tomb of Azam Shah (Plate 3)

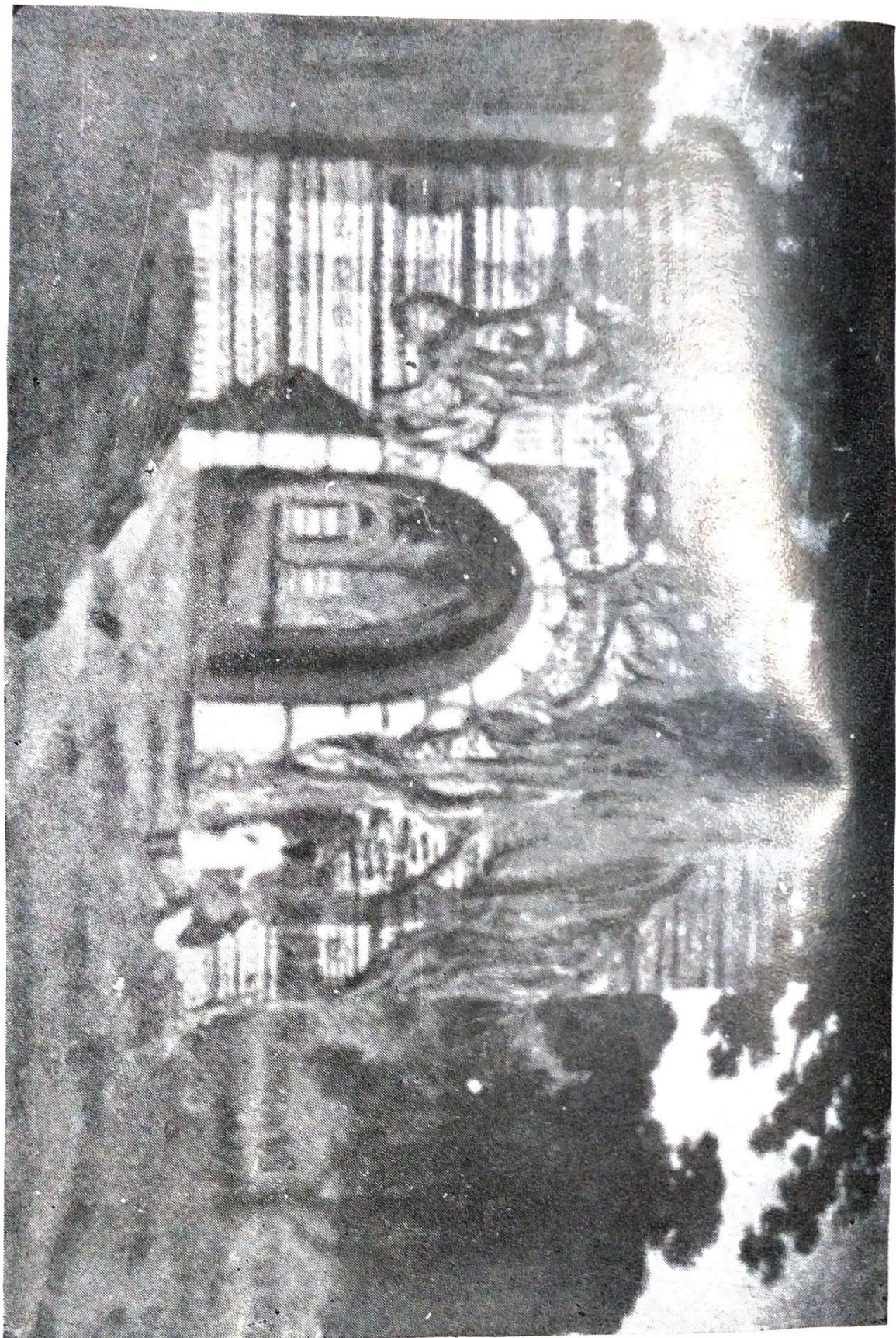


Ornamental decoration of Azam Shah's Tomb (Plate 4)

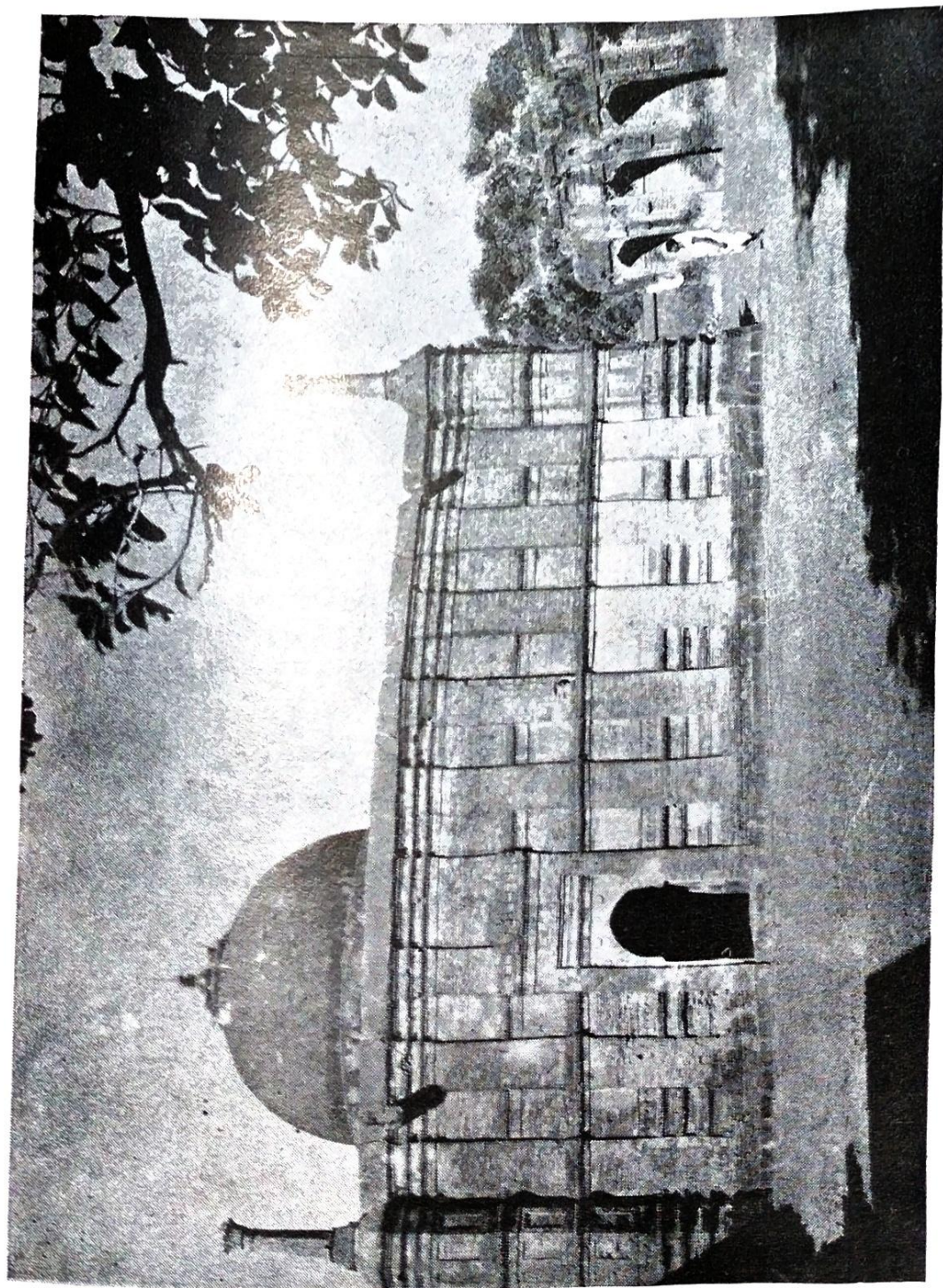


Mausoleum of Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah (Plate 5)

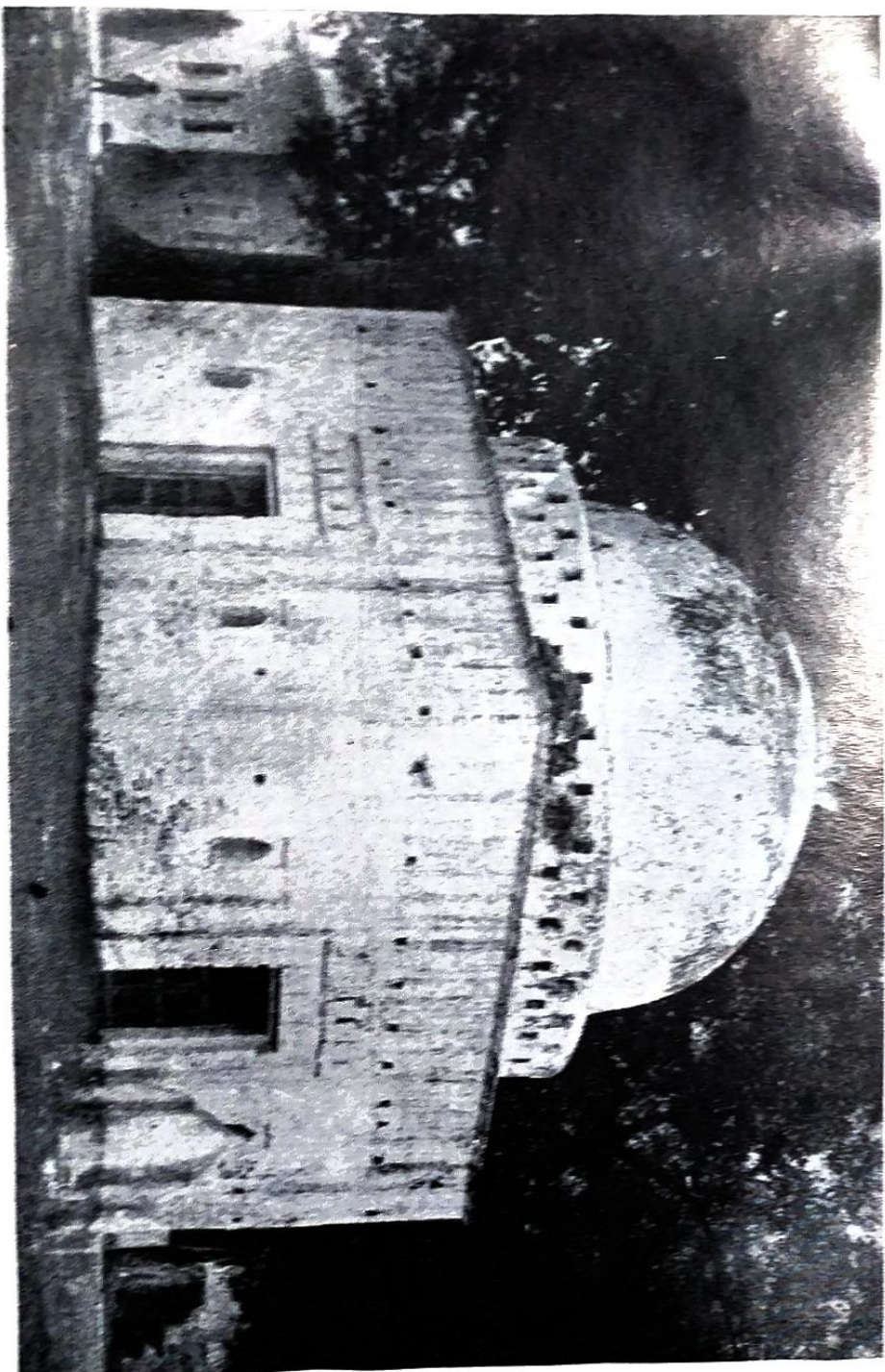
Courtesy : Archaeological Survey of India



Gateway of Husain Shah's Mausoleum (Plate 8)



Qadam Rasul Building (Plate 9)



Mausoleum of Bakhtiyar Khalji at Boudpur, Bihar Sharif.

disappearance of the epitaph therefrom. Secondly, the stones and bricks from old monuments and buildings were regularly sacked and employed for the construction of the developing towns of English Bazar, Hugli, Rajmahal, Murshidabad and Calcutta etc.¹⁵ For this act of dismantling and spoilation, according to Grant's Essay (*V Report*, p. 285), the Nizamat Daftar of Murshidabad recieved a sum of Rs. 8000/- annually from the Zamindars under the head of 'Qimat Khishtkar' for obtaining therefrom the beautiful enamelled bricks and the black basalt stones. Early in the 19th century many carved stones found in the ruined city of Gaur, are said to have become the prey of the Calcutta undertakers and others for monumental purposes.¹⁶ Since 1899, the practice of demolishing has been stopped by the Government. Thirdly, robbers and thieves in search of concealed treasures also destroyed the structures. Fourthly, the less permanent building materials like mortar and bricks were employed, though at times stone slabs were also used.

The aforesaid are some of the causes which led to the destruction of the old monuments. Before proceeding to the main topic, it will not be out of place to give here a short account of the Sultans of Bengal.

The history of Bengal is the history of turmoil and unrest. Sometimes it was governed by the Sultans of Delhi and sometimes by their appointed governors, who at times revolted against the centre to establish their own independent rule. In order to curb their independent spirit, Alauddin Khalji divided the province into East and West Bengal in 1310 A.D., with separate governors appointed at Sonargaon and Laknauti respectively. His policy in the long run proved to be a failure, as it was found that during the reign of Mohammad Bin Tughlaq, Fakhruddin Mubarak, the armour-bearer (Silahdar) of Bahram Khan, the governor of East Bengal, occupied the seat of government at Sonargaon after his master's death, and thus laid the foundation of the rule of the independent Sultans of Bengal in 1338 A.D./739 A.H.

Likewise, in West Bengal also Alauddin Ali Mubarak, the commander of Qadar Khan, the Governor of Laknauti murdered his master and proclaimed his independence. But before he could subjugate the whole province, Shamsuddin Iliyas Khan, his step-brother killed him and captured the throne in 740/1342. After defeating Ikhtiyaruddin Ghazi, son of Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah in 1352, he brought the whole province under his rule and he is truly the first independent Sultan of Bengal.

The province of Bengal was ruled by many kings under a number of different dynasties which started from the year 601/1204 and ended with

15. Abid Ali, *Memoirs of Gaur and Panduah*, p. 45 ; H. Blochmann, *Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal*, p. 131 (f. n.).

16. Abid Ali, *Op. cit.*, p. 45

the invasion of Munim Khan, a general of Akbar in 986/1578 when it was annexed to the Moghul Empire.

It is not intended here to go into the architectural details of the tombs and mausoleums, as these have already been described by scholars earlier. What is aimed at in these pages is to present the available mass of materials, based on historical works and archaeological evidences on the tombs and mausoleums of Sultans of Bengal.

The tombs and mausoleums of the following Bengal Sultans have been identified, some on the basis of historical records and some on local traditions. A number of these which are still in existence are given below whereas some of them have altogether disappeared :

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| 1. Bakhtiyar Khalji (d.602/1206) | |
| 2. Mohammad Shiran (d.605/1208) | |
| 3. Ghiasuddin Iwaz (d.624/1226) | |
| 4. Sikandar Shah (d.792/1390) | — (Plates 1 & 2) |
| 5. Azam Shah (d.799/1409) | — (Plates 3 & 4) |
| 6. Jalaluddin Mohammad Shah (d.835/1431) | (Plates 5 & 6) |
| 7. Shamsuddin Ahmad Shah (d.836/1432) | (Plates 5 & 6) |
| 8. Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah (d.864/1459) | (Plate 7) |
| 9. Ruknuddin Barbak Shah (d.887/1482) | (Plate 7) |
| 10. Alauddin Husain Shah (d.931/1525) | (Plate 8) |
| 11. Nusrat Shah (d.939/1532) | (Plate 9) |
| 12. Ghiasuddin Mahmud Shah (d.945/1538) | |

MOHAMMAD BAKHTIYAR KHALJI

The first ruler of Bengal was Bakhtiyar Khalji, who after conquering Nadia and Gaur in 601/1204,¹⁷ led an expedition to Tibet which ended in fiasco. He returned to Devkot, his military outpost near Gangarampur, 18 miles south of Dinajpur and breathed his last in 602/1206.¹⁸ According to Ferishta, the body was brought to Bihar and buried there. *Bihar District Gazetteers* mention the existence of Bakhtiyar's mausoleum at Imadpur in Bihar Sharif, based on local tradition.

Regarding the mausoleum, Diwakar¹⁹ describes it as an old solidly built structure. The place of the missing epitaph can still be marked. According to Dr. Z.A. Desai²⁰, the architectural style, represented by squinch system supporting the domes and the slope of the hemispherical dome, leads him to the conclusion that it is of a later period.

17. P. L. Gupta, *JNSI*, Vol. XXXVIII, 1976, pp. 81-87.

18. Minhaj, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Eng. Trans., Raverty, p. 572 ; Blochmann, *Op. cit* , p. 147.

19. *Bihar Through the Ages*, p. 383.

20. *Islamic Culture*, January, 1972, p. 17.

As regards the use of squinch²¹ to support the circular base of the dome, it may be pointed out that in the mausoleum of Iltutmish the same method was adopted.²² The squinch system was also common in the other Muslim countries.²³ Bakhtiyar Khalji died only about thirty two years before the death of Iltutmish. Therefore, the employment of squinch system in construction of dome is neither remote nor impossible. By this, it is not meant to stress that the construction of the mausoleum is original. May be, it was built at some later date. Unfortunately, the description of the ornamentation, if any, of the tomb has not been furnished which could have given us some idea about the stone carvings and its designs.

MOHAMMAD SHIRAN

After the death of Bakhtiyar Khalji, Ali Mardan, one of his officers occupied the throne. Another officer, Mohammad Shiran on hearing the startling news marched to Devkot, captured Ali Mardan and proclaimed himself as the Sultan of Bengal. Ali Mardan somehow managed his escape to Delhi and with the help of the Imperial army returned to avenge his defeat. In the encounter that followed Shiran was slain and Ali Mardan became the Sultan.

Minhaj²⁴ mentions his tomb at Mahisantosh but as unrecognised in the scattered ruins of the place. Gholam Husain Salim²⁵ also records the above fact but he gives the name of the place as Santosh. Blochmann²⁶ in this connection mentions two inscriptions of Barbak Shah sent to him by Westmacot from the rubbings obtained from J.P. Sneyd from the tomb of a Muslim saint at Santosh. Those inscriptions actually do not belong to the tomb but were carried from some nearby ruined mosques and placed over them by the local people. Sneyd²⁷ in course of his description writes, "the city among the remains of which the tomb is situate, is known as Santosh and the tombs are said to be those of a lady named Mahi Santosh and her daughter." To his description Westmacot opines, "I do not think the name Mahi Santosh has anything to do with the Mohammedan occupants of the tomb. Santosh is the name of the Parganah and Mahi is clearly connected with Mahigunj, the mart of Mahi." The place is situated under the Thana Potnitala, District Dinajpur.

21. An arch, lintel, corbelling, or the like carried across the corner of a room to support a super-imposed mass, as where an octagonal spire or drum rests upon a square tower. (*Webster's Dictionary*).
22. Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture* (Islamic Period), p. 14.
23. Creswell, *A Short Account of the Early Muslim Architecture*, p. 37.
24. *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Eng. Trans., Raverty, p. 572.
25. *Riaz-us-Salatin*, Eng. Translations; A. Salam, p. 68.
26. *Op. cit.*, p. 153.
27. *Ibid.*

Blochmann²⁸ on the basis of the above fact suggested that the search for the tomb of Shiran, should be made around Mahigunj. Unfortunately, we do not know what efforts were made towards the identification of those tombs. It, however, appears to be certain that the tomb of Shiran, if any, is without any epitaph, otherwise it would have been brought to light. Hence, Shiran's tomb lies in obscurity.

GHIASUDDIN IWAZ

Ghiasuddin Iwaz succeeded Shiran. He died fighting with Nasiruddin Mahmud, son of Iltutmish near Laknauti. The exact location of his tomb could not be ascertained. But since he died fighting near Laknauti, there is every possibility that he was buried around the vicinity. A passing reference has been made by Minhaj²⁹ where he writes that when Iltutmish visited Bengal in 627 A.H./1229 A.D. he was greatly impressed by his (Iwaz's) constructive work in the form of mosques, colleges, sarais and bridges and therefore decreed that Iwaz in his grave be styled as Sultan.

This leads to the conclusion that the tomb of Iwaz existed at that time which was destroyed in the course of time.

SIKANDAR SHAH

Sikandar Shah, son of Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah was a great builder. He built the stupendous Adina Mosque at Panduah with the intention of being buried within its precincts.³⁰ Hence, the mausoleum is a part of the mosque. The greater part of the mausoleum has been destroyed and there is no epitaph either. According to the tradition he was buried in a roofless square chamber to the west of the so called *Badshah ka Takht*, situated in the northern end.³¹ It was previously surmounted by nine domes³² which collapsed over the tomb and after the accumulated debris was removed, the tomb was also unfortunately swept clean by the coolies, obviously due to sheer negligence, and thrown in the adjacent tank.³³ Martin, the author of *Eastern India*, who visited the mausoleum in 1838 found the chamber and the sarcophagus in utter ruin and the tomb was lying exposed.³⁴ He gives the following description of the mausoleum³⁵ :—

“This building (Sikandar's mausoleum) is the same height with the wing, and the apartment within is 38 feet square and has been covered by

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Op. cit.*, p. 71.

30. J. Ferguson, *History of India & Eastern Architecture*, Vol. 2, p. 257 ; J. Wise, *JASB*, 1874, Vol. XLIII, pt. 1, p. 85.

31. J. Ferguson, *Op. cit.*, p. 257.

32. M. Mart in *Eastern India*, Vol. 2, p. 652 ; Dani, *Muslim Architecture of Bengal* p. 72 (f. n.).

33. Abid Ali, *Op. cit.*, p. 138.

34. *Op. cit.*, 652.

35. *Ibid.*

nine domes supported by four columns at the centre and its floor is on the level with the royal platform, that is within the wing. The grave is in the centre and is without ornament. It is composed of brick and covered with an arch. The grave has been probably opened in vain search for money and it is now entirely empty.

The western side of the apartment is now fallen, but the southern contains three windows and the northern two and a door by which it communicated with another chamber or platform of the same level and size. There is no evidence to show that this ever had a roof, but on the west side it had a wall and door, to which probably the stair led, by which the royal family entered the place of worship."

The important architectural aspect of Sikandar's mausoleum is that it was multi-domed and not of the usual single dome type, and that the entrance to the tomb-chamber is from inside the mosque.

GHIASUDDIN AZAM SHAH

Azam Shah was the grandson of Ilyas Shah. His tomb lies in ruins in Sonargaon, in the District of Dacca, Bangladesh. The tomb has been assigned to Sikandar Shah because it is believed that he was buried where he fell fighting with his son, Azam Shah;³⁶ and also that Jahangir built a Dargah over his tomb. But according to the "oldest inhabitants," the Dargah was of a fakir and not of Sikandar Shah.³⁷ Azam Shah's tomb has also been pointed out to be at Eklakhi mausoleum.³⁸ This view does not seem to be correct because Azam Shah's favourite residence and capital was Sonargaon. Moreover, the ornamental decoration of his tomb is similar to that of Adina mosque built by his father, Sikandar Shah and the tradition is also strongly in favour of Sonargaon.

Since the mausoleum is lying in a completely shattered condition, the full description of the structure is not possible. However, some idea could be formed by a scanty account given by Dr. Wise.³⁹ He writes, "about 500 yards south-east of Mohallah Bhagalpur in East Bengal, on the edge of a filthy trench called 'Mag Dighi', is the tomb of Ghasiuddin Azam Shah, King of Bengal and the correspondent of the poet Hafiz. This tomb is fallen to pieces. The iron clamps that bound the slabs together have rusted, and the roots of trees have undermined the massive stones. This mausoleum formerly consisted of a ponderous stone which occupied the centre, surrounded by pillars about five feet in height. These stones are

36. Raverty, *Op. cit.*, p. 101 (f n.).

37. J. Wise, *Op. cit.*, p. 85 (f.n.).

38. Ravenshaw, *Gaur, its Ruins and Inscriptions*, p. 98; Ferguson, p. 259.

39. *Op. cit.*, p. 88.

formed of hard, almost black basalt. At the head is a prostrate sandstone pillar half buried in earth. It was apparently used, when erected, as a Chiragh-dan or stand for light."

The tomb of Azam Shah consists of a black basalt sarcophagus placed on a stone platform, all elaborately carved with ornamental arabesque designs.⁴⁰ Cunningham,⁴¹ during the course of his tour in Bengal in 1879, saw the massive sarcophagus and the pillars of the enclosure which surrounded the tomb lying on the ground. Many of the stones from his tomb were broken and stolen.⁴²

Regarding the ornamentation of the tomb, Dani⁴³ writes, "the cornice of the table has a line of billet decoration below a beaded ornament—a pattern very similar to that seen in the stone of the Badshah ka Takht in Adina Mosque. Lower down there are three panels, each showing an arched niche with a hanging lamp within. The lamps are of the same type as seen in the mihrabs of Adina mosque. The style of the designs and carvings bring this tomb very close in time to Adina mosque.

JALALUDDIN MOHAMMAD SHAH

and

SHAMSUDDIN AHMAD SHAH

The mausoleum of these two sultans is the only monument which has survived against the ravages of time and come down to us in its form intact. This Eklakhi mausoleum, as it is called, is based on the tradition that it cost a lakh of rupees in its construction. It is one of the most controversial mausoleums and many a names have been associated with the graves within, the main cause, as usual, being the absence of an epitaph. A list of such names is given below :

Sultan Ghiasuddin Azam Shah, his wife and daughter-in-law.⁴⁴

Jalaluddin Mohammad Shah, his wife and son (Ahmad Shah)⁴⁵

Ghiasuddin, Zaynulabidin and Wahuzuddin.⁴⁶

According to the most reliable traditions,⁴⁷ the highest raised tomb at the west belongs to Jalaluddin Mohammad Shah and on the east is that of Ahmad Shah while the central one belongs to the wife of Jalaluddin Mohammad Shah. "There are two stone posts at the head of the tombs

40. *Arch. Surv. of India, Annual Report, 1902-3*, p. 55.

41. *JASB*, Vol. XV, 1879-80, p. 56.

42. *Arch. Surv. of India, Annual Report, 1902-3*, p. 55.

43. *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

44. J. H. Ravenshaw, *Op. cit.*, p. 58.

45. A. Salam, *Op. cit.*, p. 118.

46. Buchanan Hamilton, *JASB*, 1833, pp. 41-44; Martin, *Op. cit.*, p. 649.

47. S. Elahi Bukhsh, *Khurshid Jahan Numa*, *Eng. Trans*: H. Beveridge, *JASB*, 1895, p. 211; Abid Ali, *Op. Cit.*, p. 125.

of Jalaluddin Shah and Ahmad Shah. The stone on the latter is raised a little above the level of the tomb which shows that the grave belongs to a martyr. The stone post of Jalaluddin's tomb is on the same level with the tomb and so it is known that he died a natural death."⁴⁸

The mausoleum is a single domed square building of about eighty feet with turrets at each corner all made of bricks and with four doors one on each side. The external walls are decorated with terracotta designs and dome with enamelled tiles, which of course do not exist today and is now fully plastered. The interior has been converted into an octagonal chamber but at each of the four corners within the thickness of the wall is a cell intended for readers of the *Quran*.⁴⁹ The ceiling of the dome is decorated with floral motifs and various other designs and painted with colours.⁵⁰ The tombs are situated in the middle of the floor with plain plaster without any ornamental carvings or designs.

As regards the architectural style it has already been mentioned that it is beyond the scope of this paper but it is considered sufficient to state here that the curved roof and carved bricks became the two important characteristic features of the Bengal architecture since then.

NASIRUDDIN MAHMUD

or

RUKNUDDIN BARBAK

The mausoleum is a square domed chamber almost exactly similar to the Eklakhi mausoleum. The building is considered as a state prison of Husain Shah, hence it is called Chor-Khana.⁵¹ But this does not seem feasible because the style of the building is that of Jalaluddin's period and a prison cannot be a palatial building with enamelled tiles that can still be seen at the cornice and at the turrets which depict the beauty of its ornamentation and design.

It has also been described as mosque—Chika (bat infested) mosque,⁵² but it cannot be taken as that either, because there is no prayer niche or mihrab in the western wall.

48. Buchanan Hamilton, *Op. cit.*, pp. 41-44; Ravenshaw, *Op. cit.*, p. 58. Ahmad Shah was assassinated by Shadi Khan and Nasir Khan, the two nobles of the court.

49. Abid Ali, *Op. cit.*, p. 126.

50. Cunningham, *Op. cit.*, *JASB.*, Vol. XLIII, pt. 1, 1874, p. 303; *Arch. Surv. of India, Annual Report*, 1902-3, p. 51.

51. Manmohan Chakravorty, *JASB*, 1909, Vol. 5, pt. 1, p. 206.

52. Abid Ali, *Op. cit.*, p. 66.

General Cunningham⁵³ gives a comparative data of Eklakhi mausoleum and Chika building which are as follows :—

| | Inside dimensions | — Walls — | Outside dimensions. |
|----------|--|------------------------------|--|
| Eklakhi— | $48\frac{1}{2} \times 48\frac{1}{2}$ ft. | 13ft. | $74\frac{1}{2} \times 74\frac{1}{2}$ ft. |
| Chika— | 42×42 ft. | $14 \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ ft. | $71\frac{1}{2} \times 71\frac{1}{2}$ ft. |

Thus, the similarity in size and style led him to the conclusion that it was a mausoleum of either Nasiruddin Mahmud or of his son Barbak Shah. Unfortunately, there is no grave inside, and this is actually the main cause of the controversy. This mausoleum also probably suffered the same fate as that of the tomb of Sikandar Shah, as is evident from the statement of Abid Ali. He writes,⁵⁴ "the floor of the building was much damaged by digging for the bat-guano accumulated on the floor which was used as a manure for the mulberry plantations in the vicinity. The practice has now been stopped and the floor levelled."

On the basis of the above statement, it could be assumed that the grave, if any, must have been levelled up by the coolies. The existence of the grave can be ascertained by excavating the central portion of the domed chamber by some expert archaeologist. Or, may be, tomb was destroyed by robbers and thieves in search of hidden treasures.

ALAUDDIN HUSAIN SHAH

The mausoleum of Husain Shah was situated at a place called Banglakot near Khazanchi Khana in Gaur. It does not exist any more. It was probably destroyed in 1846.⁵⁵ Unfortunately, we do not have the full description of the mausoleum but Crieghton (1786-1807),⁵⁶ who visited Gaur, gives a beautiful sketch and description of the gateway to the mausoleum which is as follows :—

"The gateway and the surrounding walls were cased with brick curiously carved and beautifully glazed in blue and white, in the manner of Dutch tiles of Europe. The greatest part of the materials which formed these tombs has now disappeared." Dani⁵⁷ further states, "the gateway was a highly embellished monument showing various designs in carved bricks and glittering tiles. It consisted of a single wall, the like of which is even now preserved at the Chota Sona Masjid (though its facing stones are now gone), pierced by an archway. The arch appears to have been built with stones. The wall shows several horizontal rows of moulding impressed with designs in brick and interspersed with glazed tiles."

53. *Arch. Surv. of India*, Vol. XV, 1879-80, p. 56.

54. *Op. cit.*, p. 66.

55. Abid Ali, *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

56. *Gaur, its Ruins and Inscriptions*, plate 8.; Dani, *Op. cit.*, p. 118.

57. *Op. cit.*, p. 119.

Regarding the graves, Abid Ali⁵⁸ states that there were two masonry graves which have now disappeared. He further writes that the "old people of Mahdipur and the Khadim of Qadam Rasul informed Munshi Elahi Bukhsh (the author of *Khurshid-i-Jahan Numa*, 1853-63), that these were the graves of Husain Shah and his wife, but Criegton⁵⁹ has described the other tomb as that of his son, Nusrat Shah." Major Franclin, who visited the tomb in 1810, gives a better description of the monument. He writes,⁶⁰ "You enter by a handsome arched gateway built of stone, the sides and front of this doorway are encrusted with a peculiar kind of composition, blue and white China tiling, which has a singular appearance ; at the four corners are large roses cut in the stone. The minarets which flank the building are ornamented with curious carved work of trees, flowers etc. Within the doorway is a large enclosure containing the bodies of Shah Sultan Alauddin and other branches of the royal family. The sides of the enclosure are encrusted with the same kind of blue and white composition."

All the above mentioned writers have described the beauty and grandeur of the gateway, minarets, walls and tombs but none has written about the domed chamber, the existence of which is quite apparent from the presence of a 24 sq.ft enclosure over which probably the four walls and the dome rested.

Abid Ali⁶¹ states that 50 bighas of freeland was allotted by Aurangzeb in Banglakot for the maintenance of lights on the tombs of the Sultans of Gaur in 1070/1659.

The real destruction came in 1766, when one Capt. Adams ordered the removal of the stones from the monuments for their use in Fort William in Calcutta⁶² and in hunt for the buried treasures. Gholam Husain Khan⁶³, the author of *Siyar-ul-Mutakhkhirin* records that "in the tomb and vault, opened about the year 1766 A.D. by Captain Adams at Gaur, he found such another vessel (Ood-dan, incense burner) at the foot of a royal body, perfectly well preserved for four hundred years, with two vessels for beetle or paun and some arms and lamps etc."

It is thus evident that the government, the public and the thieves all joined hands in the pillage and sacking of the monuments.

58. *Op. cit.*, pl. 59.

59. *Op. cit.*, pl. 8.

60. *Journal of a Route from Rajmahal to Gaur*, 1810-11.

61. *Op. cit.*, p. 61.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Eng. Trans : M. Raymond*, Cambray Print, Vol. 3, p. 386 (f.n 271).

Regarding the sarcophagus, Abid Ali⁶⁴ writes that it was discovered by Elahi Bukhsh in the village of Khari or Khirki, the black basalt stone was burnt and damaged probably by some robbers in search of concealed treasures. According to the *Archaeological Report, 1902-3*, the sarcophagus was found lying broken in two pieces in the town of Mahdipur, west of Gaur. Unfortunately nothing is known since then.

NUSRAT SHAH

The tomb of Nusrat Shah has been pointed out to be in Husain Shah's mausoleum.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, no description of the stone carvings of the second tomb has been given by any of the writers discussed above. Probably it was also similar to that of the tomb of his father, Husain Shah, which has, of course, now also disappeared.

According to other tradition the raised platform is the tomb of Nusrat Shah over which the foot-print of our Prophet Mohammad (May peace be on him) has been placed in the Qadam Rasul Building at Gaur. But this version is not correct because the inscription⁶⁶ on the entrance shows that the sole purpose of the erection of the building was to place the foot-print in it and was not intended for the mausoleum nor the elevated platform is the tomb.

As such we have no alternative but to assign the other tomb in the Husain Shah's mausoleum to that of Nusrat Shah.

GHIASUDDIN MAHMUD SHAH

The tomb of Ghiasuddin Mahmud, the last independent Sultan of Bengal, who died at Khalgaon (Colgaon)⁶⁷, shortly after his defeat by Sher Shah, has been described by Ravenshaw⁶⁸ as being situated at Sadullapur, near Gaur. The *Archaeological Survey Report of 1902-3*, p.101. also confirms that the tomb of Mahmud Shah still exists at Sadullapur.

Unfortunately, no description nor any illustration by photograph is available. The office of the Archaeological Survey, Eastern zone also does not have any record of his tomb because it is not a 'protected monument.'

64. *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

65. Abid Ali, *Op. cit.*, p. 64.

66. *Ibid.*,

67. Blochmann, *Op. cit.*, p. 14 (f.n.).

68. *Op. cit.*, p. 101.